

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-01 AID-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SSC-01 SNM-02 TRSE-00

DEAE-00 CU-02 IO-10 OMB-01 /092 W

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R 261043Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1896

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONO HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 20363

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SREF, LA, TH

SUBJECT: THAI-LAO ROUND-UP

REF: A. BANGKOK 19796; B. STATE 228053;

C. FBIS BK031047Y SEPT 75; D. FBIS BK231113Y SEPT 75

SUMMARY: RELATIONS BETWEEN LAOS AND THAILAND REMAIN TROUBLED AS SITUATIONS ARISE AND INCIDENTS OCCUR IN ONE COUNTRY WHICH THE OTHER INTERPRETS AS INDICATIVE OF HOSTILITY. THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT FOR CHANGE IN THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE PERHAPS NOT WORSENING, RELATIONS ARE ALSO NOT IMPROVING BETWEEN THAILAND AND LAOS. THEY ARE BOTH HAVING AT EACH OTHER IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, ALTHOUGH FROM TIME TO TIME ONE GIVES WAY TO THE OTHER, PERHAPS IN A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT THINGS DO NOT GET TOO FAR OUT OF HAND.

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2. REFUGEE PRESENCE: AN IMPORTANT POINT OF DISCORD CONTINUES

TO BE OCL AWDS

IN GENERAL AND LAO

RIGHTISTS IN PARTICULAR IN THAILAND. THE SIX RIGHTISTS WHOSE DEPARTURE FROM THAILAND LAOS DEMANDED A MONTH AGO (SISOUK NA CHAMPASSAK, THONGLIT CHOKBENGBOUN, OUDONE SANANIKONE, KHAMHOU BOUTSARAT, ETAM SINGVONGSA, SOUTCHAI VONGSOUVAN) HAVE ALL LEFT FOR FRANCE OR THE UNITED STATES.

3. FURTHER EXPULSIONS? IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER LAOS IS GOING TO DEMAND THAT OTHER FORMER LAO OFFICIALS LEAVE THAILAND. HOWEVER, THE PGNU HAS REQUESTED THE RTG TO FURNISH IT A LIST OF LAO RIGHTISTS IN THAILAND. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER THE NATION PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 25 A LIST OF THOSE EXILES THE THAI SPECIAL BRANCH CONSIDERS THE MOST PROMINENT. THEY ARE: FORMER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT PHOUI SANANIKONE, PRINCE BOUN OUM NA CHAMPASSAK, GENERAL KOUPRASITH ABHAY, GENERAL SILAC OATHAMMAVONG, FORMER FINANCE MINISTER NGON SANANIKONE, BUATHONG PHOWANA (ASSUME THIS IS BG BOUATHONG PHOTHIVONGSA), GENERAL KHAMSAI SANANIKONE, FORMER SECSTATE FOR PUBLIC WORKS HOUMPHANH SAIGNASITH, AND KAMKHON WAONGNALAD (UNKNOWN TO US).

4. THE THAI DO NOT INTEND TO ACCEDE TO FURTHER PRESSURES FROM THE LAO ON REFUGEES. KOSON SINTHAWANON, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER SEPTEMBER 25 THAT THAILAND WOULD DRAW THE LINE AT THE SIX MILITARY RIGHTISTS WHO HAD JUST LEFT. HE SAID THAT THE RTG UNDERSTANDS WELL THE COMMUNIST TACTIC OF ESCALATING DEMANDS, FOR CONCESSIONS TO WHICH THAILAND RECEIVES NO CREDIT OR THANKS, BUT ONLY MORE DEMANDS.

5. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE MAJORITY OF THE FORMER LAO OFFICIALS, IF THEY ULTIMATELY DO HAVE TO LEAVE THAILAND, WILL GO TO FRANCE. (THE FRENCH, WHO HAVE BEEN ADMITTING LAO INTO FRANCE ON THE BASIS OF AN ID CARD, INFORMED THEIR EMBASSY IN BANGKOK SEPTEMBER 24 THAT FROM NOW ON LAO REFUGEES ARE TO BE PROCESSED UNDER THE SAME STRICT CRITERIA USED FOR VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIANS. THIS IS BOUND TO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR LAO TO MIGRATE TO FRANCE.) AT THIS TIME, WE
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ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY OTHER PROMINENT LAO REFUGEES REMAINING IN THAILAND, EXCEPT OF COURSE LONG TIME RESIDENT PHOUMI NOSAVAN AND HIS HOUSEHOLD.

6. CLANDESTINE ENTRY: ANOTHER PROBLEM IS CAUSED BY THAI SLIPPING SECRETLY INTO LAOS AND VICE VERSA. WE HAVE ALREADY NOTED THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY SMUGGLING (REF A). LAOS HELD FROM SEPTEMBER 11 TO 24 FOUR THAI DISTRICT OFFICIALS

WHO HAD INTENDED TO SPEND JUST A NIGHT ON THE LAO SIDE OF THE RIVER. THE LAO CHARGED THEM WITH INVOLVEMENT IN ARMS AND CAR SMUGGLING AND IN FORGING BORDER PASSES, BY WHICH THEY WERE ALLEGEDLY TRYING TO ENABLE THREE LAO MERCHANTS TO LEAVE THEIR COUNTRY. THAILAND, FOR ITS PART, IS SAID TO BE HOLDING FOUR LAO STUDENTS IN SI CHIANG MAI DISTRICT OF NONG KHAI PROVINCE. ACCORDING TO A NEWSPAPER REPORT SEPTEMBER 23, THE PL AND THAI WERE NEGOTIATING TO TRY TO EFFECT AN EXCHANGE OF THESE TWO GROUPS OF PRISONERS, BUT THE LAO APPARENTLY EITHER WERE GETTING NOWHERE OR HAD SECOND THOUGHTS, FOR THEY PROCEEDED TO RELEASE THE THAI THE SAME DAY. ON SEPTEMBER 24, DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER PRAKOP PRAYUNPHOKKHARAT SAID THAT THAILAND IS HOLDING "FEWER THEN TEN" LAO ON SUSPICION OF ENTERING THE COUNTRY FOR ESPIONAGE PURPOSES. AND ON AND ON IT GOES.

7. PL TROOPS INSIDE THAILAND: MISSIONARIES AND OTHERS HAVE REPORTED SEEING PL TROOPS OPERATING ON THAI TERRITORY, IN THE REGION ALONG THAT PART OF THE ESTERN LAO (SAYABOURY PROVINCE) BORDER LINKED BY LAND RATHER THAN SEPARATED BY THE MEKONG RIVER. ONE MISSIONARY TOLD OF HIDING A MONTH AGO WHEN HE OBSERVED A PL PATROL OF TEN WALKING ALONG THE PATH. IN CONNECTION WITH SUCH REPORTS ARE ACCOUNTS OF AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND MORTAR FIRING, GENERALLY AT OR IN THE VICINITY OF LAO REFUGEES WHO HAD FLED INTO THAILAND. IN ONE ACCOUNT, MORTAR FIRE DIRECTED AT MEO CAMPS AT BAN NAM LAN IN MAE CHARIM DISTRICT OF NAN PROVINCE TWO WEEKS AGO REPORTEDLY SENT OVER 5,000 PEOPLE FLEEING IN PANIC TOWARD THE TOWN OF NAN. IN THEIR FLIGHT, MANY DROWNED IN A SWIFT, DEEP RIVER THEY

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1897
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONO HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 20363

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

HAD TO CROSS. WE DO NOT KNOW IF THE NUMBER TOTALLED SEVERAL HUNDRED AS REPORTED IN REF B BUT FIND IT PLAUSIBLE. THE AP REPORTED WHO FILED THE STORY FROM BANGKOK IS WELL-KNOWN TO US AS A CAREFUL REPORTER. HE KNOWS THE AREA WELL AND HAD THE STORY CORROBORATED BY THREE DIFFERENT SOURCES. THE EMBASSY HAS NO REASON TO DOUBT ITS VERACITY.

8. BORDER SHOOTING INCIDENTS: BORDER INCIDENTS ARISE NOT ONLY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THAI NAVAL VESSELS ON THE MEKONG BUT ALSO FROM GUNFIRE AIMED BY ONE SIDE AT THE OTHER. THUS, LAO CHARGE THAT THAI TROOPS FIRED M-79S AND MACHINE GUNS AT AN AREA IN THEIR HOUA KHONG PROVINCE ON AUGUST 24 (REF C). THE PL FIRED INTO THE THAI TOWN OF NONG KHAI ON SEPTEMBER 3 WHICH BADLY FRIGHTENED LOCAL RESIDENTS, ALTHOUGH THE INCIDENT WAS NOT AS SERIOUS AS THE PRESS MADE IT OUT TO BE. FOR THESE AND OTHER REASONS, BOTH SIDES HAVE ANNOUNCED A STRENGTHENING OF MILITARY DEFENSES ON THEIR RESPECTIVE SIDES OF THE BORDER.
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9. WAR OF WORDS: MEANWHILE, THE INVECTIVE CONTINUES. THAI OFFICIALS AND THE THAI PRESS GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEIR COUNTRY MUST GET ALONG WITH THE NEW LAOS AND PROVIDE SOME AID TOWARD THAT END. THE RTG HAS EVEN SUGGESTED TO THE LAO ITS WILLINGNESS TO PAY INCREASED RATES FOR ELECTRICITY SUPPLIED NORTHERN THAILAND FROM THE NAN NGUM DAM (DISCUSSIONS ARE TO BEGIN OCTOBER 1). AT THE SAME TIME, THE THAI STAND UP FOR WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS THE CORRECTNESS OF THEIR STANCE. CONSIDERABLE INVECTIVE FLOWS OUT OF LAOS ABOUT THAI PROVOCATIONS, HYPOCRISY, AND LACK OF GOOD INTENTIONS. THE DRV--WHICH MANY THAI BELIEVE IS PURPOSEFULLY STIRRING UP TROUBLE BETWEEN THE TRADITIONAL BIG AND LITTLE BROTHERS SO THAT LAOS WILL RELY HENCEFORTH ONLY ON NORTH VIET-NAM--OFTEN ADDS ITS VOICE TO THE DIN, MOST RECENTLY IN A RADIO BROADCAST ASSAILING THE "UNFRIENDLY THAI ATTITUDE" IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS (REF D).

10. COMMENT: THE THAI ARE TRYING TO BE BOTH PATIENT AND FIRM WITH THE LAO, AND HOPE THAT LOCAL BORDER INCIDENTS DO NOT GET OUT OF HAND ON THE GROUND. ACCORDING TO MFA POLITICAL DIRECTOR GENERAL KOSON, THE THAI DO NOT WANT TO PRESSURE THE PGNU TOO HARD, LEST THEY DRIVE THE LAO FURTHER INTO HANOI'S EMBRACE. THE THAI COMMON WISDOM OF THE MONTH SEEMS TO BE THAT EVENTUALLY THE DRV WILL PRESSURE THE LAO OVERMUCH, AND THE LAO WILL TILT BACK TOWARDS THAILAND. IN THE MEANTIME, THE THAI LOOK FORWARD TO A STATE OF CONTINUOUS, BUT PROBABLY MANAGEABLE STRAIN, AND ARE PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT SUCH A STATE OF AFFAIRS.
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